

**A FALLEN HERO
GUIDELINES FOR A LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH RESPONSE PLAN**

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

On April 20, 2000, the Center Point Fire Department experienced its first Line-of-Duty Death (LODD). Unprepared for such a catastrophic event, the Center Point Fire Department found itself relying solely on the support of outside fire agencies. The problem statement addressed in this research involves the Center Point Fire Department not having the essential knowledge and guidelines for managing a full-scale LODD Response Plan.

The purpose of this research project is to develop and implement a LODD Response Plan and identify survivor benefits for the membership of the Center Point Fire Department. Through the means of literature reviews, questionnaires, and interviews, the author will research current guidelines for both LODD Response Plans and survivor benefits.

By using action and descriptive research methods, the following questions will be answered:

1. What are the benefits of having an established LODD Response Plan?
2. What are the essential components of a LODD Response Plan?
3. What are the state and federal survivor benefits for a fallen firefighter?
4. What concerns related to the establishment of a LODD Response Plan do the members of the Center Point Fire Department have?

The results of the research produced an essential foundation needed to develop a LODD Response Plan for the membership of the Center Point Fire Department.

Recommendations were made to the Center Point Fire Department to adopt a LODD Response Plan for purpose of coping with future line-of-death incidents. A recommended LODD Response Plan model was developed as a result of this research project and submitted for fire administration's approval. See Appendix A. In addition, a fallen firefighter survivor benefit package was developed for the purpose of outlining both the financial and college tuition benefits for the fallen firefighter's spouse and children.

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INTRODUCTION

On October 6-7, 2001, the 20th Annual National Fallen Firefighters Memorial will recognize 101 firefighters killed in the line-of-duty during the 2000 physical year. Of those brave firefighters that gave the ultimate sacrifice to protect the life and property of their community was a firefighter by the name of Rickey Davis. Firefighter Rickey Davis, was the first firefighter killed in the line-of-duty while performing fire suppression activities for the Center Point Fire Department in a suburb of Birmingham, Alabama. Unprepared for such a catastrophic incident, community leaders and fire officials with the Center Point Fire Department found themselves searching for the essential knowledge and available resources needed to perform a proper LODD protocol.

The problem statement for this research paper involves the Center Point Fire Department's not having the essential knowledge and guidelines for managing a LODD Response Plan for the general fire service membership.

The purpose of this research is to develop and implement a LODD Response Plan and identify survivor benefits for the membership of the Center Point Fire Department. By the means of literature reviews, questionnaires, and interviews, the author will identify current guidelines on developing a LODD Response Plan and identify survivor benefits offered to both the spouse and children of fallen firefighters.

By using both action and descriptive research methods, the following questions will be answered:

1. What are the benefits of having an established LODD Response Plan?

2. What are the essential components of a LODD Response Plans?
3. What are the state and federal survivor benefits for a fallen firefighter?
4. What concerns related to the establishment of a LODD Response Plan do the members of the Center Point Fire Department have?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Center Point Fire Department is the largest unincorporated fire district within the southeast portion of the United States. Located just north of Birmingham, Alabama, the Center Point Fire Department encompasses approximately 65 square miles of heavy residential, commercial and industrial areas. The Center Point Fire Department employs 100 career firefighters and paramedics functioning within a government body of a five-member board known as the Board Trustees. The department operates on an annual 3.5 million-dollar budget, offering both fire and ALS transporting services to more than 65,000 citizens. The department responded to over 5000 fire / ems calls during the physical year of 2000.

On April 20, 2000, a disastrous event occurred when a firefighter employed with the Center Point Fire Department died after becoming trapped inside a burning building during fireground activities. A tremendous burden was then placed upon the leadership of the department to perform all the necessary duties required in family notification, funeral arrangements and survivor benefits.

With the many unknown dangers faced by professional firefighters today, there is a likelihood of that such a devastating LODD event could occur without warning. With this mind, it is imperative that today's fire service leaders be better

prepared to handle an unexpected line of duty death of a fellow firefighter. The problem statement addressed in this research project relates to the personal effectiveness of executive leaders to properly manage a LODD Response Plan within their organization. By using key leadership traits taught in *Executive Leadership course*, the author was able explore and develop a LODD Response Plan and a survivor benefit package for the membership of Center Point Fire Department.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review explored existing LODD Response Plans and survivor benefits throughout the fire service profession. The review involved a search of current fire service publications, journals, Internet searches, interviews and questionnaires.

LODD Response Plans

Following the recent terrorism acts resulting in the deaths of hundreds of New York firefighters, the news headlines reported the grim news of “yet another Fallen Hero.” Then news articles compared and contrasted the deaths of firefighters who died in the line of duty while sacrificing their life to protect others from the danger of fire and other life-threatening emergencies. However, the “family members and co-workers of these fallen heroes, lives, as they once knew it, will never be the same again” (Rainone, August 1999).

Jerry Holt (2000, March) wrote, “although while we continue to strive to prevent firefighter line-of-deaths, we should always be prepared to handle the tragic loss of one of our own in a line of duty deaths (p.30). His writing illustrated

a newly developed program funded by the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation. The program titled “Taking Care of Our Own” was developed to assist fire organizations with the tragic loss of a firefighter. The course is divided into five self-assessment modules that teach pre-incident planning, family notification and department support plans.

In a recent Alabama Fire Chief’s monthly newspaper article titled “The Bugle”, best describes the important fundamental principles needed to address a LODD. This particular fire service article was viewed by many fire service leaders as a key element in handling a LODD. Due to the enormous demand on the subject of LODD, the author made arrangements with the National Fallen Firefighters’ Foundation to host a 1-day course in Birmingham, Alabama. Fire service leaders from around state attended the course and all agreed that a LODD Response Plan is an integral part of any fire service organization. See appendix D.

John D. Peige (1984, February) indicated in his article titled, *When Tragedy Strikes: A Guide*, the essential components needed to develop a standard guideline for addressing line-of-duty deaths (p. 46).

1. Initial On-Scene Actions (Investigation)
2. Family Support
3. Department Support
4. Benefits for Survivors
5. Funeral Protocol
6. Investigations
7. Public Information Officer: Media – Press releases

Author Warren L. James wrote (1998, October), "There is never a good time for a fire service funeral, but there are ways to make the process go more smoothly, if not less painfully" (p.50). He goes on to say that a well-trained honor guard can be very helpful in such a situation. In Warren Jame's article, he sites nine lessons learned from a recent line-of-duty death within his fire department.

- (1) Review your fallen firefighter policy and protocol. If for some reason your department does not have a LODD Response Plan, develop and implement one. Without a current LODD Response Plan, a fire department will find itself inadequate for the family and department's needs
- (2) Formally, organize an honor guard. The author states that he found himself short on pall-bearers, flag bearers and family escorts. He also stressed the point of always having an honor guard function under the terms of a chain of command concept
- (3) Review or write a formal dress uniform policy and purchase dress. By using a company identified in the author's article as Lighthouse Uniform Company, fire service officials were able to purchase different uniform options and purchasing plans.
- (4) Make contact with other agencies. Fire organizations should be aware of available resources such as local and state police officers for escorts, rifle details, bugler, bagpipes and drums, color guard, and military units
- (5) Contact local funeral directors to discuss special needs that you may have. Funeral homes will need to the assist personnel in equipping the fire apparatus with special casket attachments and funeral rehearsals
- (6) Make sure that the agency can take apparatus and personnel out of service for the funeral. Many times, fire departments will need mutual aid assistance in covering both fire/ems calls

during the funerals. Being able to partnership with surrounding communities will be necessary for the fire department (7) Keep current file of important telephone numbers These numbers should include the agency's human resource representative, family members, the chaplain, the State and International Firefighter Associations, and other survivor benefit contacts (8) Do not neglect the department's command structure. Always use a command structure from the beginning of the incident, until the firefighter is laid to rest (9) Delegate responsibility. Delegating not only helps key fire service leaders in dealing with the LODD, but also gives an opportunity for others to serve and start the healing process (p.52-53).

William C. Peters (1998), describes in his article titled *Final Farewell To A Fallen Firefighter*, a list of standard fire department funeral protocols.

- I. Family Desires
- II. Planning Process
 - a. officer in charge of operations (OIC) Police Liaison
 - b. liaison to family
 - c. logistics
 - d. public information officer
 - e. police liaison
 - f. liaison to public officials and other city agencies
 - g. officer in charge of honor guard
- III. Funeral Home Honor Guard
- IV. Funeral Planning

V. Ceremony

In an article by author Robert Leonard (1994), he stresses the importance of getting the word about a LODD. In conjunction with telecommunications, he established a special hot-line with voice-messages. His department's messages consisted of the funeral arrangements and other information detailing both interdepartmental and outside agencies participation (p.50).

The publication known as "Taking Care of Our Own", sponsored by the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation (2000), recommends ten procedural components: (p.4):

I. Establishing a Family Support Team- the Department's Family Support

Team will be responsible for necessary functions before, during, and after the funeral. The Chief will activate the team as needed. Based on the department resources, members of the team will handle the following responsibilities:

- a. liaison between the team and the chief
- b. death benefits
- c. transportation and lodging out-of-town
- d. media coordination
- e. hospital liaison
- f. funeral or memorial service
- g. personal support of the family

II. Notifying Survivors

- a. two members of the fire department make notifications

- III. Notifying Members of the Fire Department
 - a. notify both on and off personnel
 - b. notifying the fire department chaplains
- IV. Notifying others
 - a. elected officials
 - b. death benefits
- V. Working with the media- department should take steps to ensure proper notification of media sources
- VI. Dealing with Hospital
 - a. meeting with hospital officials
 - b. arrangements with the family for food and transportation
- VII. Establishing a Community Response Network
 - a. police escorts
 - b. funeral home directors
 - c. childcare for family members
 - d. meals for family members following the funeral
 - e. identify banks for special funds
- VIII. Assisting the Family Before and During the Funeral- ensure that the family's wishes come first.
- IX. Providing Benefit Information to Family- maintain an up-to-date list of death benefit package for survivors
- X. Assisting the Family after the Funeral- department maintain contact with family and establish procedures to ensure ongoing support.

Notification of family members following a line-of-death can set the relationship between the family and fire service members for years to come (National Fallen Firefighter Foundation, 2001, p. 29). An example of the proper procedures are outlined below:

1. In Person

- Always do the notification in person, never by phone.
- For the family members living out of the local area, arrange for authorities in that area to make the notification in person.
- Immediately find the firefighter's emergency contact information to know who needs to be notified in person. Usually, the spouse (or unmarried partner) and parents of the firefighter should be first priority.

2. In Time and with Certainty

- Before making notification, have positive identification of the deceased firefighter.
- Never discuss a fatality over the radio. This may result in a family member receiving the news before you can notify them in person.
- Get to the survivors quickly. Don't let media notify them first.

3. In Pairs

- Have two people present to make the notifications. Survivors may experience severe emotional or physical reactions when they learn of the death.
- Use the employee's emergency contact information to identify uniformed member of the fire service to accompany the department representative. It is helpful to have the department chaplain or a friend of the firefighter's family.
- Take two vehicles, if possible. This will allow one of you to take a survivor to the hospital, if necessary, while the second person stays with other family survivors.
- Before you arrive, decide who will speak and what that person will say.

4. In Plain Language

- Clearly identify yourself and present identification, then ask to come inside.
- Notification should take place in a private setting.
- If you did not know the family member, make sure you are talking to the right person.
- Begin with "I have very bad news" or "I'm so sorry to have to tell you this".
- Use the words "died" and "dead" rather than terms such as "passed away" so the message is absolutely clear. Speak slowly. Get to the point quickly.

- Calmly answer the survivor's questions. It is fine to say, "I don't know" if you don't.
- Use his or her name when referring to the firefighter, rather than saying "the body".

5. With Compassion

- Allow survivors to express emotions. Do not try to talk them out of their grief.
- Accept your own emotions. It is okay if you cry during notification, but stay calm.
- Never leave immediately after making a notification. Offer to help the survivor call friends or family members. Do not leave before someone else arrives.
- Do not take the firefighter's personal items with you when you make the notification. Tell the family they will receive them later. Most survivors will need some time before they feel able to deal with these items.
- Provide the survivor the opportunity to see the deceased firefighter, even if the body is badly disfigured. Offer to transport the family to where the firefighter is and help prepare them for what they will see.
- Before leaving, write down important information, including the names and telephone numbers of the department personnel who will work with the family.
- Have one member of the department stay with the family, unless the family declines.

James C. Schatzle (1993, March), wrote about the importance of a CISD team implemented into the LODD Response Plan. By incorporating a CISD team, the fire service agency will be able to provide mental health professionals, emergency services and peer support groups to the grieving family and fire personnel (p. 154). These types of CISD teams help educate emergency personnel on job-related stress and how to manage it job related stress.

The two common functions of a CISD team are to defuse and debrief personnel involved with a critical incident. A defusing takes place within hours of the incident and has the purpose of emotionally stabilizing personnel so that they can continue functioning both on and off duty. In comparison to debriefings, the program is led by a mental health professional and peer support personnel. They

discuss relationships of emotional impact from the critical incident and provide suggestions to personnel and family members on how to reduce the stress related to their experiences.

Survivors Benefits

Nancy Gist (2001), director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, provides a detailed explanation on the Public Safety Officer's Benefit Program (PSOB). The Public Safety Officer's Benefit Program was enacted in 1976 to assist in the recruitment and retention of law enforcement officers and firefighters. Congress was concerned that the hazards inherent in law enforcement and fire suppression and the low levels of state and local death benefits might discourage qualified individuals from seeking careers in these fields, thus hampering the ability of communities to provide for public safety. The PSOB Act was designed to offer peace of mind to men and women seeking careers in public safety and make a strong statement about the value American society places on the contributions of those who serve their communities in potentially dangerous circumstances (p. 13).

The PSOB Program provides a one-time financial benefit to the eligible survivors of the public safety officers whose deaths are the direct and proximate result of a traumatic injury sustained in the line of duty. The total amount of benefit for the year 2000 was increased to \$151,635.00. The benefit is adjusted each year on October 1 to reflect the percentage of change in the Consumer Price Index (p. 15).

Under Section 36-30-1-7 of the Code of Alabama (1975), firefighters and peace officers who are members of an organized fire department (paid or volunteer), killed either accidentally or deliberately, or who die as a result of injuries received while engaged in the performance of their duties are entitled to compensation in the amount of \$50, 000.00 dollars. Dependents of the deceased firefighter will receive compensation following the completion of both a death application and hearing by the Board of Adjustment, a branch of the Department of Treasury.

In addition to monetary compensation, dependents of fallen firefighters can receive the following list of both national and local scholarship funds.

National Scholarship Programs

Paul Sarbanes Scholarship Program, National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

Public Safety Officer's Educational Assistance Program (PSOEA) Department of Justice

MasterGuard's Fallen Heroes Scholarship Fund

W.H. GMC Clennan Scholarship (International Association of Firefighters)

State of Alabama

Alabama Firefighter's & Law Enforcement Tuition Fund, Act 99-448, 1999

KID's Chance Scholarship Fund, Alabama Law Foundation

In summary, the literature review provided a general overview of related subjects pertaining to a LODD Response Plan. Authors from various fire service backgrounds provided essential elements required to develop and implement a LODD Response Plan and survivor benefit package. Therefore, information

gained from this research project was the basis of a newly drafted LODD Response Plan and survivor benefit package for the membership of the Center Point Fire Department.

PROCEDURES

This research project was the direct result of a recent firefighter death within the Center Point Fire Department. Many of the written materials used in this research project were obtained from the Learning Resource Center in Emmitsburg, MD. However, additional information was gathered through the usage of the Internet and through questionnaires and interviews from federal, state, and other fire service organizations.

Questionnaire Instruments

Two instruments were used to measure responses on both the LODD Response Plans and benefit package. First, there was a mail-out questionnaire consisting of a one-page questionnaire. Respondents was asked to complete the questionnaire and return the response in a self-address envelope within the deadline of August 31, 2000. Secondly, the department's computer web-site was formatted to obtain answers to the questionnaires via Internet. This type of survey instrument was proven to reflect the majority of all responses received by data collection.

Limitations

The focal point of limitations with the LODD survey was partly due to the small percentage of LODD Response Plans within the state of Alabama. When compared, many of the larger fire departments (municipalities greater than 100 employees) prove to have both LODD and benefit packages; however, the

smaller fire departments (less than 100) depended mostly on outside agency assistance.

RESULTS

These results indicate information from research questions and the responses of questionnaires.

Research Question 1. What are the benefits of having an established LODD Response Plan?

The benefits of pre-planning a LODD offers a fire service leader the opportunity to perform professionally during the most stressful times in his or her career. After gaining knowledge about a LODD Response Plan, the fire service administrator can become more effective and reduce a certain amount of emotions experienced during a line-of-duty death.

Research Question 2. What are the essential components of a LODD Response Plan?

The essential components needed for a LODD Response Plan start with the personal information package provided to each fire department member. The personal package contains information about the individual's desires if he or she should die in the line of duty. Fire service leaders should strongly encourage each member to complete the personal package after discussing it with his or her family. Once the package is completed, it should be sealed and placed in the personnel file for safekeeping.

Supplies for a LODD funeral should be inventoried and maintained at all times. A list of all accessories should include mourning bands for department badges, flags, casket attachments, and contact numbers for outside resources.

This may include area honor guards, Scottish bagpipes and drums, and funeral directors.

The family notification officer (FNO) plays an important role in notifying the next of kin. His responsibility includes a prompt and judicious notification in person with at least one representative accompanying the FNO. The FNO should be prepared to assist the next of kin with immediate emotional trauma associated with the LODD.

Funeral arrangements should always reflect the family wishes. In all LODD's, the firefighter's personal information package should be reviewed. This will assist fire service administrators in the implementation phase of a LODD Response Plan. Remember, the final decision rests upon the family.

As mentioned by author Paul Martin, any LODD can swamp the average fire chief. Using all available agencies that include local, county, state and federal agencies is an essential element in performing a Line-of-Duty Death Response Plan.

Research Question 3. What are the state and federal survivor benefits for a fallen firefighter.

Funeral Benefits- a maximum of \$3,000.00 is available for burial expenses through Worker's Compensation. Workers' Compensation Division, Department of Industrial relations. Industrial Relations Bldg., 649 Monroe Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36130 (334)-242-2868 or 1-800-528-5166

*Check with your local funeral homes for public servant for burial and funeral benefits.

One-Time Death Benefit- benefit of \$50,000.00 for a line-of-duty death. Delayed death (up to 10 years) qualifies for benefit. Application must be filed within a year from the date of death. Volunteers are also eligible for total disability compensation of \$50,000.00. Contact: State Department of Finance, Board of Adjustment, State Capitol. Room E-302, Montgomery, Alabama 36130 (334)-242-7175, Section 36-21-102 Act 99-448, 1999.

www.legislative.state.al.us/codeofalabama/1975/36-30-1

Workers' Compensation Benefits- benefit to one department is 50% of the average weekly wage; benefit to two or more dependents is 66 2/3%. Benefits have a weekly minimum and maximum. Benefits payable for 500 weeks following the line-of-duty death.

Pension Plan- Alabama Retirement System of Alabama – one year salary, total contributions plus interest. 135 South Union Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36104-0001 (334)-832-4140, www.rsa.state.al.us.com

Education Benefit- covers tuition, fees, books, and supplies. No limit on the amount award for study in public, undergraduate institutions in state, except it may not exceed the cost of attendance. This benefit applies to both children and spouse if not remarried. Contact: Alabama Police and Firefighter Survivors Educational Assistance Program, Alabama Commission on Higher Education, 100 North Union Street, 7th Floor, Montgomery, Alabama 36130-2000 (334) 242-2274, www.ache.state.al.us.com

Federal

Public Safety Officer's Benefits- The PSOB Program provides a one-time financial benefit to the eligible survivors of the public safety officers whose deaths are the direct and proximate result of a traumatic injury sustained in the line of duty. For the fiscal year 2001, the amount is \$151,635.00. Address: Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program, 810 Seventh Street, NW, Washington, DC 20531, 1-888-7446513, www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/

Scholarship Committee- National Fallen Firefighters Foundation provides spouse and children of fallen firefighters with education and job training. This program "fills in," when state educational benefits are not available, P.O. Drawer 498, Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727, e-mail: firehero@erols.com

Research Question 4. What concerns related to the establishment of a LODD Response Plan do the members of the Center Point Fire Department have?

Firefighters with the Center Point Fire Department had two concerns related to establishment of a LODD Response Plan. First, members wanted strict confidentiality with their personal information package. The document was found to be very personal to both employees and their family members. In an effort to reduce the amount of anxiety, chief officers made sure that all information

packages were completed and sealed individually. In fact, personnel actually witnessed the sealing and filing of their LODD personal information document. Secondly, following a recent LODD, members with the Center Point Fire Department had some apprehension about staying abreast of the knowledge on current survivor benefits offered for fallen firefighters. By the establishment of a new senior level position “Survivor Benefit Officer,” this individual would be charged with maintaining current information on survivor benefits both local, state and federal survivor benefits.

DISCUSSION

The consensus of my research clearly identified that the essential elements necessary for a LODD Response Plan and survivor benefit package were lacking in the fire departments surveyed. From the one-hundred fire departments surveyed fewer than 5 percent had an active LODD Response Plan Response and/or survivor package.

In an article written by Hal Bruno (director of National Fallen Firefighter Foundation located in Emmitsburg, Maryland) states that no fire department, regardless of size, is immuned from the possibility of a LODD (Bruno, February 2000). In his article titled “Preparing Ourselves For the Worst,” Director Bruno points out two important issues for families of fallen firefighters (p. 10).

- Family financial needs- a certified line-of-duty death makes a firefighter’s family eligible for the federal government’s Public Safety Officer’s death benefit. This benefit is administrated by the Department of Justice.

- Scholarships programs- additional benefit provided by the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation in cases where the state does not allow for tuition assistance. Applications for the Fallen Firefighter Tuition fund can be obtained from the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation, P.O. Box Drawer 498, Emmitsburg, MD, 21727.

The results of this research data from both the National Fallen Firefighters' Foundation located Emmitsburg, Maryland and the International Fire Chiefs Association provided the most up-to-date sources of information pertaining to LODD. Both agencies provided and endless amount of current information from various fire departments sources, along with state and federal agencies from around the United States.

In a recent news release from the FEMA, director Joe Allbaugh reflects on the latest deaths of the World Trade Center and the values of having a LODD Response Plan when tragic strikes.

Headlines: 20th Annual National Fallen Firefighter Memorial

President Bush to Honor Nation's Fallen Firefighters

Allbaugh (2001), "Each year we honor America's fire service heroes who gave their lives in the line of duty to serve their communities. It is with a heavy heart that we honor those who perished in 2000, and we take time to give special recognition to the more than 300 fire service heroes lost in battle from the Fire Department of New York on September 11, 2001."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the vast number of firefighter deaths during the New York City World Trade Center disaster, fire service agencies from around the country

recognized the importance of a LODD Response Plan and survivor benefit package. As previously mentioned, the problem statement of this applied research project (ARP), involves the Center Point Fire Department's not having the essential knowledge and guidelines for managing a full-scale LODD Response Plan. The purpose statement for this ARP is to develop and implement a LODD Response Plan and identify current survivor benefits offered by both state and federal organizations.

The research data obtained in this (ARP) illustrates the importance of having a LODD Response Plan and survivor benefit package. Based upon the literature reviews, questionnaires and interviews, the author was able to develop and recommend future implementation of a comprehensive LODD Response Plan and survivor package.

The following recommendations shall be adopted for future implementation by the Center Point Fire Department.

Recommendation 1. The Center Point Fire Department membership shall assist in the development and implementation of a comprehensive LODD Response Plan.

Recommendation 2. Senior level administrators shall maintain current records on all survivors' benefits pertaining to line-of-duty death beneficiaries.

Recommendation 3. The Center Point Fire Department members shall attend nationally recognized programs for addressing LODD Response Plans. For example: "Taking Care of Our Own" sponsored by the National Fallen Firefighter's Foundation provides from a good foundation to the overall elements

of a LODD Response Plan. In addition, the senior level staff members shall maintain a current membership status with International Fire Chiefs' Association (ICHIEFS). This membership shall serve as catalysis for obtaining valuable research materials on current trends involving LODD Response Plans.

In conclusion, this research project demonstrated that a LODD Response Plan and survivor benefits are truly an essential tool in today's fire service. While fire departments around the country spend millions of dollars and thousands of man hours in preparation for both fire and ems emergencies in their communities, little planning goes into preparing for a serious injury or death (Defors, July 1989).

Coping with a LODD is difficult at best. But with the proper LODD Response Plan and prior knowledge of current survivor benefits, the amount of personal strain on both the family and fire service members can be somewhat reduced following the loss of a brother firefighter.

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Appendix A

Center Point Fire Department LODD Response Guidelines

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities for following the Center Point Fire Department LODD Response Plan in the event of a firefighter line-of-duty death.

PROCEDURE

The Center Point Fire Department LODD Response Plan shall outline the necessary guidelines required in the event of line-of-duty death.

ASSIGNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

In the event of a line of duty death, the on duty Assistant Chief, Battalion Chief shall notify the following:

- Notify the Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, Fire Department Chaplain and Fire Commissioner
- Secure the scene of the incident with the assistance of Jefferson Sheriff's Department and Alabama State Fire Marshal's representative
- Assign Family Liaison for family notification (shall be performed in-person by a Chief Officer and firefighter)
- Notify NIOSH for post incident investigation
- Notify the Office Manager to obtain personnel file and the employee emergency contact information forms on the deceased
- Assign PIO for media release (but withhold all information concerning the firefighter's death until the Fire Chief's approval)
- Assign Fire Department dispatcher to notify fire department employees of the LODD following Fire Chief's approval
- Assign an Auditing Officer and Evidence Technician for securing all personal effects and firefighting gear of the deceased
- Assign Hospital Liaison for relaying information on firefighter's medical condition
- Notify Fire Department Medical Director for critical incident debriefing and mental support for both family and personnel members
- Assign LODD Notification & Benefit Officer- responsible for the notifying the Public Safety Officers' Benefit staff, the Alabama Board of Adjustments, Workers' Compensation, Alabama Retirement System, department's life insurance providers and the National Fallen Firefighter Association

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

Funeral Liaison Officer- under the direction of the chief, the funeral shall provide the following coordination and interaction with the individuals and/or organizations

- assist the family in organizing and planning the funeral as they choose
- make contact with the family and church minister
- make contact with the funeral director and interact with family and fire service ceremony request
- make arrangement with law enforcement agencies for escorts (church to cemetery)
- continue to inform the department members of the details regarding the incident and funeral/memorial service arrangements
- coordinate all plans for the fire department participation during funeral and burial site

MEMORIAL AND TRIBUTES

Memorial Liaison Officer- shall maintain communication between the family and fire department employees on all LODD Memorials or special Tributes.

- National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland
- Alabama Fire College Memorial Site
- IAFF Memorial in Colorado Springs
- Local park dedications and fundraisers
- Scholarships

Appendix B

Survey Cover Letter: Line-of-Duty Death

Dear Chief,

Hello, my name is Donnie P. West, Jr., Assistant Fire Chief with Center Point Fire Department. As a graduate student, I have just completed a four-year fire service program titled "Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP)". For the past four years, the curriculum requirements involved (8) weeks of classroom study on the NFA campus then followed by the completion of (4) applied research papers.

Due to a recent line-of-duty death in my department, I have elected to develop and implement a LODD Response Plan. In addition to the LODD Response Plan, I have expanded my research to identify a list of death benefits available for the family members of fallen firefighters.

In order to compile data for my research, I have enclosed a one-page questionnaire outlining a series of questions surrounding the subject of Line-Of-Duty Death (LODD) and benefits. By completing this survey and returning in the self-addressed envelope, it will enable my department to have a current LODD Response Plan and benefit package for both the Center Point Fire Department and its employees.

Please take a moment to complete the enclosed survey or log on to our web site www.centerpointfire.com. Your assistance in this research project is greatly appreciated by all personnel. You may request copies of this report following its submission to the National Fire Academy.

Sincerely,

Donnie P. West, Jr., Assistant Chief

Appendix C

Survey for the Executive Fire Officer Research Project

Please check the appropriate category and return before August 31, 2001. When completed with the survey, please return in the self-address stamped envelope provided for your assistance. Thank you

Fire Department Demographics

1. Type of fire service

- ☐ Career
- ☐ Volunteer
- ☐ Combination

2. Government Structure

- ☐ County
- ☐ Municipal
- ☐ Township
- ☐ Fire district
- ☐ Private

3. Personnel size

- ☐ Less than 50
- ☐ 50 to 150
- ☐ 150 to 300
- ☐ greater than 300

4. Has your department ever experienced a Line-of-Duty Death?

Yes _____ No _____

5. Does your organization have a line-of-Duty Response Plan?

Yes _____ No _____

6. Does your department offer a Death Benefit Awareness Package?

Yes _____ No _____

7. If your department has suffered a Line-of-Duty Death, please list an overview of any lessons learned.

Appendix D



THE BUGLE



The Official Newsletter of the Alabama Association of Fire Chiefs

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Special Interest:

- **New Editor**

Ms. Brenda Olson is the new editor. You can reach her at 256-539-7675; fax-256-534-0532; email: bolson3001@aol.com.

- Please Be Sure to Complete and Return the Enclosed Survey on page 18.





Check Us Out!

LINE OF DUTY DEATH

Taking Care of Your Own

By: Deputy Chief Donnie P. West, Jr.,
Center Point Fire Department

On October 7-8 2000, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation honored 104 firefighters killed in the line of duty. Of the 104 firefighters, firefighter Roger Bryant McEwen of Hanover Fire Department was recognized from the state of Alabama. Firefighter McEwen suffered a massive heart attack on July 4, 1999 while fighting a trailer fire. This year the state of Alabama has experienced two additional firefighter deaths. Firefighter Rickey Davis, Center Point Fire Department and firefighter Paul Husband, City of Mobile Fire Department.

The "Line-of-Duty Death" committee was formed after recognizing the enormous burden placed upon a fire department during a firefighter line-of-duty death. Committee members are made-up of individuals with hands-on experience from the recent line-of-duty death of firefighter Davis. Currently committee members are actively involved in producing an after-action-report of the funeral protocol used during firefighter Davis' funeral. This report

will summarize three critical areas (pre-funeral phase, funeral phase, and post funeral phase). Results of the report will be made available to AAFC membership at the Mid-Winter Chief's Conference.

Some of the main goals of the line-of-duty death committee are focused toward offering an educational resource tool and technical support group. As part of our educational goal, the line-of-duty death committee will be sponsoring a course offered by the National Fire Academy known as "Taking Care of Your Own". The 8-hour course is designed to assist fire service administrators in developing a pre-incident plan for fire service line-of-duty deaths. Dates and times for the 2001 course are still in the planning phase. Another important goal of the committee is to make available a technical support group. When requested through the AAFC, fire officials will be able to access individuals or information concerning funeral protocols and survivor benefits. Speaking from experience, this is a valuable asset when it comes to the various requirements in survivor benefits.

In addition, the line-of-duty death committee would like to encourage the AAFC members to support our future Firefighter Memorial and the purchase of a personalized brick for the National Firefighter Memorial "Walk of Honor."

"Professionals Enhancing The Profession"